

## Home Electrical Safety Tips

May is National Electrical Safety Month...here are some safety checks you can make in your home today to ensure electrical safety:

### Outlets

- Check for outlets that have loose-fitting plugs, which can overheat and lead to fire.
- Replace any missing or broken wall plates.
- Make sure there are safety covers on all unused outlets that are accessible to children.

### Cords

- Make sure cords are in good condition—not frayed or cracked.
- Make sure they are placed out of traffic areas.
- Cords should never be nailed or stapled to the wall, baseboard or to another object.
- Do not place cords under carpets or rugs or rest any furniture on them.

### Extension Cords

- Check to see that cords are not overloaded.
- Additionally, extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis; they are not intended as permanent household wiring.
- Make sure extension cords have safety closures to help prevent young children from shock hazards and mouth burn injuries.

### Plugs

- Make sure your plugs fit your outlets.
- Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong fit a two-conductor outlet; this could lead to an electrical shock.
- NEVER FORCE A PLUG INTO AN OUTLET IF IT DOESN'T FIT.
- Plugs should fit securely into outlets.
- Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances.

### Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)

- GFCIs can help prevent electrocution.
- They should be used in any area where water and electricity may come into contact.
- When a GFCI senses current leakage in an electrical circuit, it assumes a ground fault has occurred. It then interrupts power fast enough to help prevent serious injury from electrical shock.
- Test GFCIs according to the manufacturer's instructions monthly and after major electrical storms to make sure they are working properly. Replace all GFCIs that are not working properly, but never replace a GFCI with a standard non-GFCI outlet or circuit breaker.

### Light Bulbs

- Check the wattage of all bulbs in light fixtures to make sure they are the correct wattage for the size of the fixture.
- Replace bulbs that have higher wattage than recommended; if you don't know the correct wattage, check with the manufacturer of the fixture. Make sure bulbs are screwed in securely; loose bulbs may overheat.

**Water and Electricity Don't Mix**

- Don't leave plugged-in appliances where they might fall in contact with water.
- If a plugged-in appliance falls into water, NEVER reach in to pull it out—even if it's turned off. First turn off the power source at the panel board and then unplug the appliance.
- If you have an appliance that has gotten wet, don't use it until it has been checked by a qualified repair person.

**Entertainment/Computer Equipment**

- Check to see that the equipment is in good condition and working properly.
- Look for cracks or damage in wiring, plugs and connectors.
- Use a surge protector bearing the seal of a nationally recognized certification agency.

**Outdoor Safety**

- Electric-powered mowers and other electric tools should not be used in the rain, on wet grass or in wet conditions. Inspect power tools and electric lawn mowers before each use for frayed power cords, broken plugs and cracked or broken housings.
- If any part is damaged, stop using it immediately. Repair it or replace it.
- Always use an extension cord marked for outdoor use and rated for the power needs of your tools.
- Remember to unplug all portable power tools when not in use.
- When using ladders, watch out for overhead wires and power lines.

**Lightning**

- During an electrical storm, do not use appliances (i.e., hairdryers, toasters and radios) or telephones (except in an emergency); do not take a bath or shower; keep batteries on hand for flashlights and radios in case of a power outage; and use surge protectors on electronic devices, appliances, phones, fax machines and modems.

**Wiring**

- Unless you are qualified and experienced in electrical work, consider hiring a licensed electrician for electrical repairs, maintenance and installations.

Adapted from the Electrical Safety Foundation International website.